

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET CONSTITUTION DAY BUT NO NEW CONSTITUTION

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET CONSTITUTION DAY DID NOT OCCASION
THE UNVEILING OF THE MUCH-DISCUSSED NEW SOVIET CONSTITUTION,
NOR WAS THERE EVEN MUCH OFFICIAL COMMENT ABOUT IT.
WE HAVE COLLECTED A FEW ADDITIONAL INFORMAL BITS OF
INFORMATION WHICH INDICATE THE PROJECT IS STILL A LONG
WAY FROM COMPLETION. END SUMMARY.

2. GIVEN BREZHNEV'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE CONSTITUTION
DRAFTING COMMISSION AND THE PROMINENT MENTION THE NEW CONSTITUTION
RECEIVED AT THE 25TH PARTY CONGRESS, SOME LOCAL
OBSERVERS HAD THOUGHT THIS YEAR'S CONSTITUTION DAY (DEC 5)
MIGHT PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SOVIETS TO EITHER
UNVEIL A NEW DOCUMENT OR ISSUE SOME KIND OF PROGRESS
REPORT. NEITHER HAPPENED. SUBSTANTIVE CENTRAL PRESS COMMENT
ON THE HOLIDAY WAS LIMITED TO A LEAD EDITORIAL
SUNDAY IN PRAVDA, WHICH DID NOT EVEN MENTION THE NEW
CONSTITUTION, AND IZVESTIYA'S LEAD EDITORIAL, AS WELL
AS PART OF A MORE GENERAL IZVESTIYA ARTICLE, SATURDAY EVENING. MOST
SPACE WAS DEVOTED TO PRAEANS TO SOVIET SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC
DEVELOPMENT, BUT THE IZVESTIYA EDITORIAL DID NOT BREZHNEV'S 25TH
CONGRESS COMMENTS ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION. IN THE GENERAL ARTICLE,
ON SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY, SOVIET CONSTITUTIONAL CHRONOLOGY
WAS BRIEFLY REVEIWED, AND THE AUTHOR NOTED THAT A LONG TIME
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HAD PASSED SINCE THE APPEARANCE OF THE LAST CONSTITUTION IN 1936.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD REFLECT
"THE VICTORY OF SOCIALISM, FIX THE BASIC LINES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALIST SOCIETY AND ITS POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, AND
STRESS THE HUMANITARIAN CHARACTER OF
THE SOCIALIST STATE, WHOSE HIGHEST GOAL IS THE CONSTRUCTION OF
COMMUNIST SOCIETY."

3. TELEVISION PROGRAMMING RELATED TO THE HOLIDAY WAS
LIMITED TO DOCUMENTARIES AND OTHER BLAND OFFERINGS
IN PRAISE OF THE SOVIET NATION AND PEOPLES.

4. SOME ADDITIONAL BITS OF INFORMATION TEND TO CONFIRM
THE IMPRESSION THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION WILL TAKE
SOME TIME. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE
AT A RECENT PUBLIC LECTURE ON THE SOVIET BODY OF LAWS
(SEPAIR) HAD TO ASK THREE TIMES TO GET ANY ANSWER ON
THE NEW CONSTITUTION. WHEN THE SPEAKER DID REPLY, HE
NOTED ONLY THAT DRAFTING THE DOCUMENT WAS "A VERY DIFFICULT
PROCESS AND WOULD TAKE TIME."

5. AND DURING A RECENT CALL AT THE LATVIAN SUPREME
COURT, EMBOFF ASKED DEPUTY CHIEF JUDGE FOR CIVIL MATTERS
ABOUT THE NEW CONSTITUTION. LATTER REPLIED THAT HE
AND HIS STAFF HAD HEARD NOTHING RECENTLY ABOUT THE PROJECT, AND
ASSUMED MUCH MORE TIME WOULD BE NEEDED TO
COMPLETE IT. HE (AND LITHUANIAN LEGAL AUTHORITIES WE
VISITED LAST YEAR) SAID THE REPUBLICS SHOULD GET A CRACK
AT THE DRAFT WHEN INITIAL WORK ON IT IS COMPLETED IN MOSCOW.
IN SHORT, INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE INITIAL DRAFT IS FAR FROM
COMPLETED. MATLOCK

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